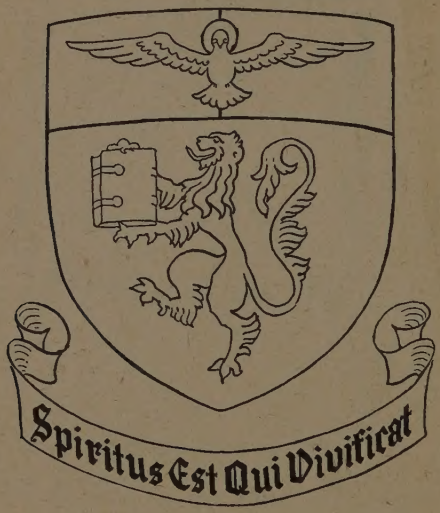

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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A Study in LITTERAE INHUMANIORES

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CHAPEL HILL

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TO

EMILE LEGOUIS

THIS STUDY is an expansion of a paper read before the Graduate Club and the Philological Club of the University of North Carolina in 1928-29. In its present form, it includes a paragraph from the introduction to *The Reinterpretation of American Literature* (Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1928) and a paragraph from a review-article in *Studies in Philology* for January, 1929.

PREFACE

"SOON we shall have to reach a decision whether the Ph.D. stamps a person as belonging to the élite, or merely hallmarks him as a Robot of Learning with a dispensation from the common duties of higher civilization." These words of Dean Otto Heller of Washington University (*The Association of American Universities*, 1928) might form the text of this little book.

"In literary scholarship, I have never thought that the ultimate goal was the search for knowledge, but rather the laying a foundation of knowledge on which might be built an education and a criticism, not simply an education in taste and appreciation or merely a criticism of present and past literary practice; but rather, let us say, on knowledge we are to build a criticism and philosophy of life." These words by Professor Ashley H. Thorndike of Columbia University (Presidential Address, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Supplement, March, 1928) might form another text for this little book.

These two quotations will, I think, sufficiently explain the purpose of this study of the American scholar.

N. F.

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I

A CENTURY OF SCIENCE

"WERE we required to characterize this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word. . . . We may trace this tendency in all the great manifestations of our time; in its intellectual aspect, the studies it most favors and its manner of conducting them; in its practical aspects, its politics, arts, religion, morals; in the whole sources, and throughout the whole currents, of its spiritual no less than its material activity. . . . To us that live in the midst of all this and see continually the faith, hope, and practice of everyone founded on Mechanism of one kind or other, it is apt to seem quite natural, and as if it could never have been otherwise. Nevertheless, if we recollect or reflect a little, we shall find both that it has been, and might again be quite otherwise."

Thus did Carlyle describe, exactly one hundred years ago, as we might describe today, the conse-

quences of the scientific movement that arose in the seventeenth century. In the seventeenth century, science was an esoteric cult, an ardent faith for the few. By the nineteenth century, it had won a majority of the thinkers and writers, the intellectuals of the Victorian era, but had not yet profoundly touched the masses. In America, not till about 1885 did the followers of Darwin win their fight for the theory of evolution among *our* intellectuals, and many more years elapsed before the masses of our population were impregnated with the scientific account of creation and the scientific attitude toward life. To this day large elements in our society continue to resist, often in a spirit of obscurantism, the truths of science. Yet, in the main, science has at last come to permeate our lives and thoughts, and ours, even more than Carlyle's, is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word. We will yet make the world safe for machinery.[1]

Certainly, we ought not to share Carlyle's romantic hostility to science. To this hostility Carlyle was led not so much by a genuine insight into "man's wholly dualistic nature" (a nature at once changing and

[1]In what age save ours could one imagine a college catalogue describing "A course dealing with the value, principles, and technique of worship in the church and Sunday school .... This course will include laboratory work in connection with local churches"? If this seems naive, what are we to think of a topic in a recent programme of the sophisticated Modern Language Association of America—"The Mechanism of Wordsworth's Mysticism"?

unchanging), as by a romantic "feeling of Wonder" at "this world of perpetual flux" which often took the place of insight—that love of wonder which Dr. Johnson had accurately defined as the effect of novelty upon ignorance. I see no occasion for us to be charmed with our ignorance. I do not share the romantic contempt for reason and logic. I do not see how anyone can wilfully reject the rational spirit of science: its simple honesty, its wholesome doubt, its boundless curiosity, its passion for knowledge, its patient accumulation of evidence, its strict method, and, in its higher manifestations, its imaginative penetration. These we have gained, by slow and painful stages, and, let us hope, are never again to lose in any Dark Ages hereafter.

Yet there is a sense, as Charles H. Grandgent has suggested, in which we ourselves may be said to be living in the Dark Ages. Though aiming at light, science has too often indulged in teachings at bottom as obscurantist as religious Fundamentalism, as dogmatic as mediaeval theology. In its true function, science is merely descriptive. As we have recently been reminded by the President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, it interests itself properly in the mechanical aspect of reality, and describes that aspect without prejudice to other aspects of reality, leaving the universe of value or worth

to philosophy, religion, and art. Its own universe is quantitative, a universe conceived in such terms as matter and motion, force and mass, which may be mathematically measured. As soon as one passes beyond this quantitative universe into the qualitative universe, one ceases to be a scientist, one begins to be a philosopher, or artist, or religious believer. Unhappily, however, there has been a frequent tendency among scientists imperialistically to invade territory belonging to men of these latter types, who are just as eager for truth as the scientists are. In this alien territory the scientists proceed to erect a standard on which are emblazoned the words: "The whole of reality is mechanical." This is just as dogmatic, as arbitrary, as to proclaim that the whole of reality is aesthetic or ethical or spiritual; and if we do not see it to be so, it is because we are living *within* a mechanical age and are uncritically adopting the illusions of our age; it is because we have ignored the wise remark of another Victorian, Benjamin Jowett, that, while every age is aware of the fallacies of other ages, it is peculiarly insensitive to its own. Every age of history has its special faith, and the special faith of ours is the dogmatic dream of science. For it is a matter of faith. It is a faith born of science, not a philosophic valuation *ab extra*, that tells us that the whole of reality is mechanical, that the one key to experi-

ence is science. It is a faith that causes us to extend to the whole of experience a method unquestionably suited to a part. Intoxicated with the achievements of science—and indeed our age has few other achievements to boast of—countless people not only accept such truth as science can legitimately offer, but also follow the prophets to whom reality and scientific reality are one and the same.

Recently, however, certain scientists have doubted some of their safest and most cherished conceptions, and for a whole decade more and more laymen have slipped into pure skepticism, which may be defined as the denial of the possibility of valid knowledge. Having questioned whether there is any truth save that of science, they have naturally taken the final step of questioning whether there is any truth at all. Perhaps they have forgotten that the logical deduction from this skeptical dogma, as the ancient Plato and the modern Anatole France have shown, is simply silence, a refusal to make affirmations on any subject, which is more than human nature can endure. Carlyle, who extolled on other grounds the virtue of silence, has been taunted with having preached that virtue in thirty volumes. There are times, besides, when even silence is eloquent. Obviously, mankind will never for long be sincerely faithful to skepticism.

II

LANGUAGE

WHAT have been the effects of a century of science upon the study of the art of literature? Since the time when Carlyle somewhat romantically lamented the arrival of the Age of Mechanism, literary scholarship has lived in the shadow of science, has been permeated with its spirit, has taken over its methods, has assimilated even its vocabulary. This process has been carried so far that we should now be in a position to estimate its effects.

The first prominent effect was the creation of a new science, that of language. Arising in the Romantic Movement, in the work of men like the Schlegel brothers, and developing rapidly, especially in Germany, under the spur of the scientific movement, linguistic philology became a genuine science, a branch of anthropology. Its central object is to describe the phenomena of language as a factor in the history of man —an object that does not directly assist in the understanding of literature. Nevertheless, since a knowledge of language is a necessary key to the knowledge

of literature, the new science has actually rendered essential service. If we today understand Aristotle's *Poetics*, for example, better than did the scholars of the Renaissance, it is partly because linguistic science has enabled us to read Greek more accurately. When one reflects upon the fact that, as Sir Gilbert Murray remarks, "scarcely one in ten of the nouns on the first few pages of the *Poetics* has an exact English equivalent," one appreciates how difficult it is really to understand an alien tongue, and cannot be too grateful for our purified texts and the means of using them expertly. To the linguistic philologists, again, we virtually owe our understanding of the early vernacular literatures of the European peoples, a heritage not to be underrated merely because mediaevalists have often absurdly over-estimated it. If there is today a tendency to depreciate the linguists, the explanation lies partly in their very success, which has driven young scholars to fields less cultivated, and partly in their long preponderance of influence in the universities of Europe and America, which has worked both great benefits and great harm.

The harm is now sufficiently patent. Confusing means and ends, emphasizing the instrument of language instead of the literary result, neglecting the higher tasks that alone can justify scholarship, they have in effect coöperated with the forces hostile to

the humanities and betrayed their own cause. But their day of glory is already spent, and they are giving into other hands both the torch that illumines and the torch that consumes.

III

LITERARY HISTORY

These other hands are those of the literary historians. If the first striking effect of the scientific spirit was the creation of the new science of language, the next and even more striking effect was the attempt to create a literary branch of historical science.

Like the science of language, the new literary history began in the Romantic Movement, when the historical sense—the sense of historical relativity, of the otherness of all other times and places—first entered vividly into the consciousness of men. More and more, men came to think, not in the old terms of identity, permanence, and universal validity, but in the new terms of difference, change, development, evolution. "The doctrine of evolution," as Josiah Royce asserted, "is in heart and essence the child of the romantic movement itself." Although the relativity of cultures had been perceived long before by St. Evremond, the first impressive vision of the evolution of cultures in time and space was that of Herder, to whom our modern literary history owes more than

to any other thinker. In the century after Herder came the definite establishment of the scientific doctrine of organic evolution, a doctrine that profoundly altered all departments of human thought, including history and literary history.

Literary history, in the strict view of it now prevailing, is an effort to ascertain and describe the sequence of literary phenomena objectively, scientifically, without the bias of criticism. Its ultimate purpose is to present the history of literature as a whole, regardless of linguistic and national boundaries. Hence, in theory, all the departments of literature in our universities coalesce in the department of comparative literature. Subordinate to this final purpose is the study of each national literature, Greek, French, German, etc. Subordinate in turn is the history of movements and periods within each national literature, of forms (such as the drama) and themes (such as the Arthurian cycle), of the works of each author, and finally of each work of each author. Thus, if literary history were ever completely and finally written, we should be able to assign to every work a place of its own in an unbroken sequence, and every fact regarding every work would likewise have a local and permanent habitation. Owing to gaps in the record, to the complexity of the task, and to the frailty of human reason, this comprehensive aim can never be

fulfilled, but to it the literary historian addresses himself in the hopeful spirit of the natural scientist. He regards literature as a developing organism enjoying perpetual life and containing within itself lesser organisms, the literatures of nations, periods, etc.; or, to begin at the other end, he seeks to establish the relation of each literary work to its environment, in the largest sense: its relation to the author's life (its personal environment or biographic setting); its relation to other works that exerted an influence upon it; its relation to the cultural situation of the time—the social, economic, moral, religious, philosophic, and aesthetic conditions when it was written; its relation to the physical environment, natural and artistic; and its relation to the peculiar spirit of the nation and race whence it issued. What remains after all these influences have been accounted for is regarded as the unique element in the work, its own special contribution, which may in turn become a new influence upon the future. Once published, the work takes its natural place in the phenomena of time and change.

Thus conceived, the task of the literary historian is closely similar to that of the biologist. Both concern themselves with organisms, with heredity, with environment, with evolution. Neither of them concerns himself with worth or value; it is not for them to praise or blame, but merely to describe what hap-

pened. If the historical critic of literature may be said to have any criterion for the judgment of what is excellent and what inferior, that criterion (in theory if not always in practice) is merely success in the struggle for existence. He assumes that it is the fittest works which emerge and survive. He does not interest himself in the aesthetic qualities that defy time and place, but measures a work relatively to its own time and place. The judgment that he arrives at is purely historical, never personal or human. Unless he momentarily steps out of the rôle that he has conceived for himself, he is just as much interested in a really bad book as in a good book, provided they are equal in representativeness and influence, and is *more* interested if, as is often the case, the bad book is superior in these respects. The law that he seeks is the law of fitness in the phenomenal order. He does not consider books under the form of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*), but devotes himself to describing them in their contingent aspect. He has a single guiding and limiting principle, the description of literary phenomena.

The importance of this task, the beneficent effect of the scientific movement in furthering a profounder literary history, it would be folly to seek to minimize; nor am I so inclined, finding literary history both fascinating and illuminating. How can we deal profit-

ably with a literary work of the past, such as Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde," for example, unless we have learned what history can tell us of the object of the poem, its expression of the special interests of the age in which it was written, its references to current conventions and happenings? Such study helps us to see the poem as it really is, not merely as it appears to us when we read it in an age that has quite other special interests. Literary scholarship, as well as history, has gained new powers since the time, no farther back than the eighteenth century, when, as Taine puts it, men of every race and century were supposed to be all but identical, "as if they had been turned out of a common mold."

Nevertheless we have purchased our new powers at a very high price. Insisting, at all costs, that we must be scientific, we have too often forgotten that art and science are two distinct spheres, that the inwardness of art and the externality of science are essentially alien, that the services of science in the study of an art must always be mainly tangential, that literary history, if it is to be other than superficial, cannot be regarded as a science. In a headlong pursuit of historical data, our scholars have inclined to shift their center of interest from literature to literary history, making history not a means but an end in itself. Instead of regarding time and place as obstacles to be overcome

and surpassed, or disturbing factors to be eventually cancelled, they content themselves with living in other times and places. They immerse themselves in the study of environment—biographical, social, literary, and so forth—and when they occasionally emerge from this study and from the work of other scholars of their own sort, they read the literature itself largely for its reflection of the history of its time. They are fulfilling the prophecy of Renan that "l'étude de l'Histoire littéraire est destinée à remplacer en grande partie la lecture directe des œuvres de l'esprit humain." In all their serious activities, their research, their articles and books, their college or university instruction, they commonly proceed as if unaware that their subject is literature and that the central means of understanding literature is not historical erudition but disciplined natural sense.

In a charming *Tatler* paper Addison contrasts the pedantic critic with a simple young lady devoid of rules but possessed of "natural sense," much as a satirist to-day might contrast the pedantic professor with an untutored woman—I could name one myself—who understands literature far better and who could explain the knotty lines of a poem to the scholar helpless amid all his paraphernalia. This natural sense, this aptitude for entering intuitively into the inwardness of art, is after all the fundamental virtue in schol-

arship. Although it is a special gift, just as the detective power of the historical investigator is a special gift, it can unquestionably be developed and perfected. Through constant exercise, through familiarity with at least one fine art other than literature (preferably, I should say, painting or sculpture), and through increasing knowledge of life and wisdom in the art of life (life being the subject of literature), it passes into good taste and critical insight, which are the ultimate powers of comprehension. If these powers are so rarely and so shabbily displayed by our professors of literature, it is mainly because they have chosen to exercise not natural sense but scientific method, which, like the rigmarole of rules in the eighteenth century, leads only too readily to that pedantry which Addison defined as "a form of knowledge without the power of it." As natural sense can be developed, so, unhappily, it can become atrophied. I need not enlarge upon the stock example, Darwin's loss of the faculty of responding to poetry; nearer examples abound among those "puissant Darwinians" who, as Stuart Sherman bitterly pointed out years ago, have the traditions of literature in their keeping. Their subject is not literature but the natural history of literature, as formerly it was not literature but linguistic philology. Instead of speaking of the Department of English Literature, for example, they might

more accurately speak of the Department of English Literary History.

But this is not all. Not satisfied with neglecting literature in favor of literary history, they also tend to abandon literary history in favor of isolated groups of facts. Some of our leading scholars and most of the rank and file, fearful of the broad interpretations and reinterpretations that history involves, prefer the safer task of contributing new materials for future historians. Instead of having a due respect for facts as the necessary basis for sound knowledge and the higher activities of scholarship, they appear to worship facts as facts, things as things. Employing an expert mechanical technique, they give themselves up to a blind pursuit of facts, an aimless accumulation of small additions to the sum of knowledge. If one questions the wisdom of their procedure, they will usually justify themselves by means of what I may term a mystical faith in the *brick*. They will point out that each brick in a building is essential, and that they and their students are collecting bricks for future builders. Whether the bricks will ever be used, whether they are the particular bricks that will be needed by future builders, does not, in their mystical faith in the brick, concern them. Their logic, if dubious, is better than their common sense. Common sense would seem to dictate that the supply of facts should not vastly outrun the de-

mand. The fact collectors of today are like manufacturers indiscriminately producing bricks of all kinds in appalling quantities, in total disregard of the economic law of supply and demand. We must frankly admit, it is a poor way of doing business. Let us keep our common sense, our sense of proportion. Let us remember Poincaré's remark that the universe is spawning milliards of "facts" every second. Let us remember that many, yes, the majority of ascertainable facts are not worthy of being recorded. Let us remember the real danger that accumulation of facts will overwhelm literary scholarship and prove to be a curse. More than a quarter of a century ago Friedrich Paulsen wrote, "The springs which scientific research has opened . . . flow and flow until historians and history itself are in danger of being swallowed up in the flood" (*die Quellen . . . rinnen und rinnen, dass der Historiker und die Geschichte selbst in dem Schwall unterzugehen droht*)—a catastrophe that now appears more imminent than when this scholar predicted it. Even a limited field, Paulsen maintained, cannot any longer be mastered; and we have all heard this echoed, dolefully enough, by various American scholars. We spend our days and nights not in studying the authors whom we profess to be concerned with, but in desperately "keeping up with" other scholars immersed in literary history. Largely unfamiliar even with the one national litera-

ture to which we are ostensibly devoted, we are all but wholly unfamiliar with other national literatures, and seek to dignify, with the term "specialization," our obvious provincialism. Intent upon erudition of the German type, we do not even take time for reflection. There is truth, as well as caricature, in the saying of John Stuart Mill that "The characteristic of Germany is knowledge without thought; of France, thought without knowledge; of England, neither knowledge nor thought." Knowledge without thought —the amassing of historical data unvitalized by reason and imagination in their deeper manifestations— describes only too well a common mode of American scholarship that passes for real scholarship. Only rarely is a protest raised, as when Professor Elmer E. Stoll, in a paper read before the Modern Language Association and published in *Studies in Philology*, sums up our random scholarship by saying: "If the sources, influences, and identifications *were* demonstrated, it were something, but not very much. What a prodigious expenditure of labor, so little relevant to the real understanding of the author in question or his work! . . . To the genuine man of letters what a queer and puzzling thing the programme of a Modern Language Association must be, with all its minute and extraneous considerations! The barren discussions are not only the proofs which do not prove but those

which, if they do, little matter . . . . Every fact, in a sense, is important, but not every fact is relevant or congruous; and it is extremely incongruous that the higher study of literature in this country and in Europe should be so much in the hands of mere antiquarians, [whose] teaching . . . is as irrelevant and barren as their writing."

IV

GENERAL HISTORY

FROM this comparative futility many literary scholars have recently sought to escape by going a step farther in the wrong direction, that is, another step away from literature. Not satisfied with abandoning literature in favor of literary history and its facts, they are now abandoning literary history in favor of general history.

Literary history proper is concerned primarily with the *literary* environment of an author—the state of literary affairs at the time he was writing, his relation with predecessors and successors, the relation of his own earlier and later work. Scholars of the new stripe have come to feel that the merely literary environment is superficial, that to study literature in this fashion is to study it in a vacuum; and accordingly they have turned primarily to the non-literary environment—the economic tendencies, the social forces, the political trends that seem to determine, in the last analysis, the particular direction of the creative efforts of authors.

Endeavoring to escape from the bogey of a vacuum

by immersing themselves in general history, literary scholars of this type are in effect transferring their allegiance from the republic of letters to the republic of history. Here they may do, and I think are doing, useful work. But from the point of view of the republic of letters (which is our point of view here), this transfer of allegiance is an act of treason. To be sure, the term literary history is double and looks two ways. But as greenish-blue is a color more green than blue, so literary history is a study more concerned with literature than with history. Common sense should suffice to answer the question, whether the primary object of literary history is to serve our understanding of literature or our understanding of history. Literature, indeed, should interest general historians for its revelation of moods and motives that have a correlative in outward events, and general history should interest literary scholars for its outward revelation of the inner life expressed in literature. Yet the division of labor dictates that this reciprocal interest must remain subordinate. The central concern of the historian of literature is the history of literature. He may, if he wishes, regard literary history as a branch of social history, and write, for instance, such a history of American literature as Professor A. M. Schlesinger proposes, in which Emerson would be given considerably less attention than the school readers of Wil-

liam H. McGuffey; or he may attempt an ambitious *Kulturgeschichte* or *Geistesgeschichte* in which the great authors represent the highest cultural aspirations of the people and are viewed in relation to a significant background of non-literary expressions of the time and land—a writer like Emerson, in this case, becoming a central figure illustrative of various social, religious, and political manifestations of nineteenth-century America. Farther than this he may not go, without abandoning his field of study.

The whole tendency of our present preoccupation with history of all sorts is, however, to drive the literary scholar out of his subject. Unless he firmly envisages his own special task, he is likely to submit to this centrifugal force more and more till he reaches the periphery and, before he is well aware of what has happened, finds himself pushed out altogether. This is clearly the drift of our present American scholarship. When a professor of English is awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in order to make "a study of the historical and legal literature of ancient Ireland, with special reference to Celtic parallels in the Welsh laws and historical works, and the relationships and intercourse of the early Irish with the Welsh and Northumbrian people of the island of Britain"; when candidates for the doctorate in English are permitted to write dissertations on such a subject as "Northern Travelers

in the Southern States before the Civil War"; when professors of English are awarded the Pulitzer prize in History and recognized in the League of Nations list of works in History; when one of the most erudite professors of English in the country publishes as a crowning achievement a book on witchcraft; when more and more books and dissertations are of such a nature that they merit more attention in historical than in literary reviews and only historians are really competent to pass judgment upon them, something is fundamentally wrong with our conception of literary scholarship.[1] However much general historians may welcome these new workers in history, literary scholars who remain faithful to their tasks can only

[1]Something is also fundamentally wrong with our conception of historical scholarship, judging from a report on *The Writing of History* (1926) by a committee of the American Historical Association: not merely because some 85 per cent of doctors of philosophy "never write anything even as substantial as their doctoral dissertations during the rest of their lives," but rather because "History in the hands of ultra-specialists has been too largely dehumanized." As the authors agree, the effort to transform history into a strict science fatally ignored the fact that history is a combination of science and art. Historical as well as literary scholarship has taken step after step away from art, and has now reached an *impasse*. In this plight, most of the authors of this book somewhat naively call for a cultivation of literary presentation, inadequately perceiving that what is needed is not literary style as such but rather (in the words of one contributor, Professor Abbott) "as the expression of mentality," as the result of "informing ideas." As M. Jusserand, late president of the Association, remarks too casually, history demands "wisdom," which he conceives as inborn but which is surely susceptible of training. And history cannot have wisdom, informing ideas and an humane working philosophy, till it surmounts the relativity and impressionism of contemporary thought. This is the *crux* of all our problems today.

regard them as deserters. Plainly, one of the chief needs of our scholarship today, as has recently been pointed out, is an authoritative "Laocoön" that shall unravel this confusion of literary history with history.

V

PSYCHOLOGICAL HISTORY

I SHALL just touch upon one more effect of the scientific movement on the study of literature: the endeavor to attain profundity by applying the "new psychology" to the history of individual authors and even of national literatures.

Someone has suggested that the dividing line in recent German literature has been made not so much by the *Weltkrieg* as by Dr. Freud. Signs are not wanting that the speculations of Dr. Freud will also mark a dividing line in American literature—and in American scholarship. Outside the universities, such a line already exists: amateurs and dabblers of all sorts have made a hasty study of both psychology and literature and written biographies and criticisms which are professedly science and actually buncombe. Within the universities, the idea of a sudden drop from the clear world of dates and outward events into the murky well of the subconscious has been rather disconcerting, though a few scholars, seeking light in darkness, have timorously peered down and a very few have made the

plunge and are cautiously reporting their observations. Fortunately, however, most scholars are, in this matter at least, still keeping their heads, realizing that it is futile to apply psychology to literature until the psychology proves to be other than pseudo-psychology. We have around us several new schools of psychologists, each asserting claims, not always modest, to the possession of truth, yet seriously conflicting with each other. They are having a tougher tussle than they realize with the mystery of the human mind and heart. It may well turn out to be the verdict of the future that all of them were wrong in their high pretensions, that they made discoveries true only within certain realms of reality and valuable chiefly in the field of medicine. However that may be, the attempt to apply the new psychology to the phenomena of literary history is premature and treacherous—journalistic rather than scholarly.

This attempt may nevertheless grow popular, because it offers plausiblity on very easy terms. If plausibility is least easy in an exact study like linguistic philology, it is certainly easier in literary history, still easier in general history and sociology, and easiest of all in psychological interpretation, which is nearly pure guesswork. Incidentally, it offers plausibility on very interesting terms as well, combining, as it does, the charm of lubricity with the supposed sternness of

science. But it offers no real avenue of escape for the literary scholar seeking to evade his besetting sense of superficiality.

VI

CRITICAL RESEARCH

In which direction the literary scholar will turn next —whether to thyroid glands or some other explanation of literature suggested by modern science—I cannot predict. I can predict with confidence, however, that no path opened by science will ever bring him to his goal, or even lead him far on his way, and that he will eventually be driven by the very nature of things to look for help beyond the realm of science. Since literature is an art, and since it is the only art that directly represents human ideas, he will be driven to look more and more to philosophy for light on its content and to the other arts for light upon its form. But especially, he will be driven to seek the aid of literary criticism.

The attitude of the typical American scholar toward criticism is very curious, and deserves analysis. (I am well aware, of course, that the typical scholar does not exist as such.) His attitude is a twofold and conflicting one. On the one hand, he has a cynical fear of all criticism, whether it be subjective or objective, impressionistic or dogmatic. He is in the habit of con-

trasting the "knowledge" which the scholar records with the "speculation" in which the critic indulges. He has a very special horror of the dilettante, with whom he commonly identifies the critic. That is one attitude. Along with this cynical fear of criticism, however, he secretly welcomes it, and indeed himself uses it in his teaching and publication, despite his theory. Sometimes he borrows criteria from convention, usually the convention of the great romantic critics[1], and sometimes he makes his own personal judgments of value, quite in the manner of the impressionist. This scarcely needs demonstration; any respected book in the field of literary history will show that it is so. The fact is that literary historians, of all types, are involved in an inner contradiction which they refuse to face. Inheriting romanticism as well as science, the typical scholar displays the familiar romantic conflict of head and heart, his head concerning itself with the plain facts of history, while his heart secretly claims its birthright to

[1]This is strikingly illustrated by a paper on "The Romantic Movement" read by Ernest Bernbaum at the 1928 meeting of the Modern Language Association, published in the *English Journal* in 1929, and distributed in reprint by the publisher of his forthcoming *Guide through the Romantic Movement*. Ostensibly a disinterested appraisal of the work of recent literary historians, the paper is at bottom an invitation to historical pedantry and, even more, an attempt to rehabilitate romanticism. Professor Bernbaum regards "Chaucer, Shakspere, Milton, and possibly Spenser" as less suited to scholarly study than "Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, and Shelley," who offer "the most illuminating literary discipline the world has ever known." The "real scholars" he conceives as those who have revealed the biography and environment of the ro-

emotion, enthusiasm, and all manner of delights. The typical scholar is part scientist, part dilettante—it is only the proportion of the parts that varies. He does not object, at bottom, to impressionism, indulging in it himself and respecting the right of other sound scholars to indulge in it. In much of his life and work he is an irresponsible adventurer, living not only in the phenomenal order of science but also in the romantic disorder of Vagabondia. Both scientist and dilettante, he may be thought of as a compound of Francis Bacon and Anatole France—a hard-boiled epicurean. If the "anarchy of impressionism," as Mr. Spingarn avers, is the modern critic's "natural reaction against the mechanical theories and jejune text-books of the professors," it is at the same time the professor's natural reaction against himself. This desire for a "compensation" has also been indicated by Professor Legouis, who observes that a Frenchman reading foreign scholarship is likely to marvel how "the worship of facts

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manticists and have accepted the romantic philosophy of life. As a neo-neo-romanticist dissenting from the interpretation of romanticism by "neo-neo-classicists," he contrasts the "scholarly knowledge" of romantic scholars with the "antediluvian . . . ignorance" of such humanistic scholars as Professors Babbitt and More. He offers no proof of ignorance, nor does he perceive that he really means wrongheadedness—from the point of view of the romantic critic. His central motive in the whole paper, indeed, is critical, though he never applies to himself or any other scholarly advocate of romanticism the opprobrious term of critic. Just how the scholar is to be "judicious and tolerant and courageous" in "the weighing of the facts" without being a critic is left wholly unexplained.

and details as such, in the raw state, is at times compensated by fits of mysticism, so that the reader has the hard soil of reality under his feet, and far above, at almost immeasurable distance, heavenly visions or absolute judgments not always visibly connected with the humble facts that gave them rise."

The time is rapidly approaching when the scholar will no longer be able to deal in this manner, at once naive and frivolous, with the problem of critical standards. The deliquium of the scientific study of literature will itself remind him of the fact that, logically, criticism is both anterior and posterior to scientific knowledge. It is anterior because science owes its existence to the assumption that knowledge is a good, that truth is of value—an ethical assumption. It is posterior because science is not a final end; even if our knowledge should advance infinitely, we should still confront the problem of what to do with it. The slogan of "Knowledge for its own sake" is as empty as the slogan of "Art for its own sake." We delude ourselves if we regard science as a resting place or as the whole of life. Realizing this, many scientists—Haeckel and Huxley, for instance—have gone on beyond science in their quest of a whole view. They are right in so doing; wrong only when they attempt to transform science itself into a philosophy. Thus, too, does the literary historian reveal a right instinct when

he employs standards of criticism; he is wrong only when he is a dabbler. If it is true, as the scientists tell us, that all men are incipient scientists; if it is true, as the poets tell us, that all men are in some sort poets; it is equally true, as the critics ought to tell us oftener, that all men are critics. "Criticism," said the late Mr. Brownell, "is much criticized—which logically establishes its title." All men are critics; all scholars are critics; the only question is, are they good critics or bad critics? Cynically neglecting criticism, our scholars "have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge"—to quote the words of their master Bacon, who really condemns them—"sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men." If the last phrase be interpreted in its best sense, I can see in this passage only rebuke of our present scholarship as largely mean and idle. Not in our usual procedure lies the advisableness of improving literary knowledge, but rather in the critical determination of the worth of literature to man, its human benefit and use. As historian, the scholar has the task of rendering our knowledge more and more

exact and thorough; as critic, he has the task of rendering our standards of worth more and more authoritative and serviceable. Linguistic, textual, and historical knowledge is an indispensable preliminary to literary criticism, and literary criticism is the culmination of all literary scholarship. The scholarly writer or teacher who confines his interest to the history of literature is like one who prepares for a great journey and never takes it.

That thorough critical research is more difficult than thorough scientific research must be granted. The more, then, should we refrain from random judgments and lazy impressionism, and apply our boasted industry to the search for those constants in literature and literary theory in which reside the standards that defy the varying provincialisms of the ages of history. It was in the Alexandrian age, to which our own is similar, that the principle of "universal consent" first clearly emerged, in the treatise on the Sublime attributed to Longinus. "That is truly great," said Longinus, "which gives much food for fresh reflection; which it is hard, nay impossible, to resist; of which the memory is strong and indelible. . . . When men of different habits, lives, ambitions, ages, all take one and the same view about the same writings, the verdict and pronouncement of such dissimilar individuals give a powerful assurance, beyond all gainsay-

ing, in favor of that which they admire." Today we need a number of Longinuses to redirect us to this principle of consent, this unity of memory running through the ages, of that which is strong and indelible. We have now before us, as in a laboratory, a collection of art and literature immeasurably more extensive than in the time of Aristotle or of Longinus, in which the scholar may study not only those changing aspects of literature to which we have given all but exclusive attention for a century, but also those unchanging aspects which are vastly more important. Thence must come our standards, our criteria, the "laws" of literature, which, like the "laws" of nature, are simply the best hypotheses. The results of such research must be mixed, no doubt, with serious uncertainties; but so must the results of those other types of research that seek to lay bare the secret springs of works of art with the instruments of literary history, general history, and psychology. If anything, the uncertainties appear less serious in the realm of value than in the realm of science. As one of the most distinguished of American scholar-critics, Paul Elmer More, has lately argued, "The law of taste is the least changeable fact of human nature, less changeable than religious creeds, far less changeable than scientific theories. The advent of Christianity has left it untouched, and the waning of faith does not trouble it. The hypotheses

of science—elemental spirits, antiphlogiston, corpuscular and undulatory explanations of light, atoms and ions and the continuum, catastrophism and natural selection—come and pass and come again, while the central tradition of taste is still the same." If this is even arguable, it ill becomes the historical scholar to display a cynical fear of criticism, especially since his attitude is open to the suspicion of having its true origin, not in a reasoned view of the matter, but in that unresolved inner contradiction which I have described. It is impossible to take very seriously the opinion of a man whose head and heart appear not to belong to the same person.

VII

CRITICAL LITERARY HISTORY

If the scholar does admit that criticism is the logical completion of literary history, he is likely to go on to say: "Let the critic do what he can and I will do the same. Interests differ; my own serious interest is in literary history, which is quite enough to occupy all my time." This argument has already been sufficiently answered by the observation that every reputable historian does use second-hand or personal judgments of excellence, and thus in practice acknowledges that without such judgments scholarship would be incomplete. He must be a critic in *addition* to being an historian. But more than this, as I wish to show now, he must be a critic even in *order* to be an historian.

Now, among the tasks of the historian is the determination of literary sources and influences. So long as these involve definite resemblances in diction, mechanical form, images, and ideas, the historian regards his scientific method of observation and reasoning as adequate for his purpose, but the moment he turns to indefinite resemblances in degrees and

kinds of beauty, elusive resemblances in aesthetic effects and the aesthetic causes of these effects, he is aware that his usual instruments are no longer sufficient and that he must now rely upon taste. Taste is his only means of defining aesthetic character and showing its repetition in successive authors. It need not be purely personal and arbitrary, and indeed cannot be. We need only stop to reflect, and apply the historical method to our own taste, to perceive that this taste has antecedents, and that it illustrates Coleridge's definition of taste as "the representative and reward of our past conscious reasonings, insights, and conclusions." These have sources outside of ourselves. As Brownell remarked, "Taste indeed is essentially a matter of tradition. No one originates his own. Of the many instances in which mankind is wiser than any man it is one of the chief." The best taste, I take it, is simply that which most nearly coincides with the past conscious reasonings, insights, and conclusions of mankind. Certainly taste itself, good or bad, is a spontaneous form of criticism, a criticism that does not deliberate and hold the object at a distance, but operates as feeling, bringing reader and author into rapport and at the same time separating them in some degree because of an emotional judgment—a liking of this, a disliking of that aspect of the work, in accordance with the aesthetic habits that the reader

has formed. Thus, if the literary historian can theoretically keep deliberate criticism out of his studies, he cannot practically dispense with taste and the criticism latent in taste. He will need taste when he desires to show, for example, to what extent the aesthetic qualities of Milton reappear in Wordsworth, or to what extent the qualities of Greek art were revitalized in the Hellenics of Landor. Further, I think it could be demonstrated that he will need taste, not only in dealing with strictly aesthetic but also in dealing with intellectual, ethical, and spiritual indebtedness, since there is no beauty devoid of content and every work of art is a whole which is greater than all the parts; so that the ideal historian will render a sound and fundamental interpretation only if he commands a central not an eccentric point of view, a truly humane philosophy. But I will not here press this extension of the argument; it is enough if we are safe in concluding that the literary historian, when dealing with aesthetic sources and influences, cannot hope to be thorough if he is "without taste" or displays "bad taste."

We are now in a position to understand why the historian attains his most striking triumphs when concerned with inferior literature. It is because his ordinary methods and instruments most nearly suffice for the explanation of such literature, while they do

not suffice for the explanation of superior literature. The brief success of an artistic work may be accounted for by temporary and non-aesthetic causes, but protracted success issues from excellences that are largely timeless and aesthetic, and permanent success from excellences that are wholly so. In direct proportion to the excellence of the work, therefore, is the historian's need of the capacity to explain its public reception and literary influence by means of the instruments of criticism. As it happens, this situation is the exact reverse of that of the critic, whose judgments are least secure when he is dealing with literature outside the central stream of traditional taste, and most secure when he concerns himself with the great tradition itself. Where history is weakest, criticism is strongest, and the historian needs its strength even for the accomplishment of his own task. A thorough going historian must also be a critic. Though the judgment that he aims at is historical, though he seeks to measure a work, as we have seen, relatively to its time and place, concerning himself with fitness rather than excellence and caring nothing whether a book be good or bad, the historian is bound to observe that "in any given age certain virtues are greatly admired, certain faults hardly perceived" and hence must decide what the virtues and faults of literature really are. Though he endeavors to explain rather than to praise or cen-

sure, though he is interested in the origin of aesthetic works, in the causes of aesthetic results, he is bound to observe that these aesthetic results become in turn causes and must therefore be understood. If the historian is not to be superficial, he must deal, after all, with virtues and faults, with the values of aesthetic results. Just as we deplore criticism unconcerned with historical knowledge, so must we deplore historical knowledge unconcerned with criticism. The place of criticism, in a word, is not only *beyond* history, it is also *within* history.

Though living like us in an age of relativity, Joubert perceived the element of truth in that old conception of the unity of men which had been cast aside by the new historical sense. "There is something unchanging in man (*quelque chose d'immuable*)," he declared, "and that is why there are unchanging rules in the arts and in works of art, beauties which will always please or modes of expression that will give pleasure only for a short time." With this *quelque chose d'immuable* our scholars, whether historians or critics, will hereafter more largely concern themselves. Only by an earnest study of the unchanging can our criticism, at present mainly impressionistic, free itself from caprice and aimlessness. Only by an earnest study of the unchanging can our literary history, at present merely scientific, evade that recurrent sense of inse-

curity that is driving it, in vain, from one scientific obsession to another. Only by the integration of history and criticism, the temporary and the permanent, motion and rest, can the literary scholar really escape from the superficiality and futility that appear to crown all his labors. He need have no qualms about superficiality and futility if these labors reach all the way from external facts to permanent aesthetic qualities.

This extension of his field of study will carry him outside of science. And why not? Literature is more than science, since, unlike science, it is itself critical, itself selective and qualitative, itself concerned with human values that have no counterpart in physical nature; and literature can be understood only when studied with the instruments it itself employs, which are philosophical—ethical and aesthetic in vital fusion—vastly more than they are scientific. We need criticism—not a confined aesthetic or art-for-art's-sake criticism, but criticism as comprehensive in its implications as that of Aristotle—if we are to be scholars and not pedants[1]. Modern American scholarship is in a way to becoming a veritable Polyphemus, choicely nourished on human food yet endowed with one eye only.

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[1]The nature of such a comprehensive criticism I have sought to outline in the concluding chapter of *American Criticism* (1928).

We must set about restoring the traditional alliance of scholarship and criticism, the divorce of which has worked injury to both and played havoc with education. It has made American scholarship narrowly mechanical and progressively tangential. It has encouraged an American criticism that can only be characterized as ignorant and aimlessly impressionistic, for the lamentable state of our critical journals is largely the consequence of academic failure to uphold the past as a school of judgment. And it has played a major rôle in the disintegration of American education, for it has made the study of the humanities scientific in an age already blinded with excess of scientific light, an age that is groping in vain for such other light as literature could shed if it were rightly studied.

VIII

ORIENTATION

HITHERTO, the chief debt of American education and scholarship has been to Germany, whence mainly we derived our scientific aim and our scientific method, together with the mechanism of the seminar, the doctoral dissertation, and so forth. With the passage of one hundred years since Everett, Ticknor, and Bancroft took their degrees at Göttingen, during which ten thousand Americans matriculated in German universities, an era in the history of our higher education has definitely closed, as President Thwing showed last year in his book on *The American and the German University*. It has closed because we have assimilated at last the essential virtues of German scholarship. We have learned, and shall remember, how to get exact knowledge. Is there nothing else for us to learn? Might we not advisedly turn now to France, where, to be sure, the scientific study of literature has also had a marked influence, but where other traditions of scholarship have offered a resistance wholly wanting with us? French reflection, French lucidity, French finesse,

French moderation, the French concern for humane assimilation, the French devotion to general ideas, the French insistence upon taste and style, the French interest in criticism—these qualities, all but absent from our own work, I take to be worthy of imitation. Or we might even turn to England, where again there have been traditions of scholarship capable of resisting and correcting the excesses of scientism, among them a cultural background and a sense of poetic style, together with the sanative powers of common sense and humor—qualities by no means frequent with us.

Wherever we may turn next for inspiration and objectives and method, the fact is that the pattern we have followed is already out of date; that Germany is beginning to regard the work of American professors as examples of old-fashioned German scholarship; that Germany is growing aware that the age of philology and minute historical research is drawing to a close, that, if drudgery remains, the worst of it is over, the important texts are made, the necessary facts are accumulated, and that the time is at hand for a generation that shall justify the labors of their predecessors and give in a higher sense a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men. It is conceivable that Germany will learn to do this higher work as well as she did the work of preparation for it, though I suspect that, in her intemperate addiction

to *philosophische Spekulation*, she will too often lose herself in sociology and metaphysics. The field is open, for America as for other lands. Why may we not even aspire to leadership ourselves and attain here, upon this cosmopolitan continent, a finer vision and better method than those of the age of acquisition which is passing? If we are wanting in a native tradition of scholarship, we may the more readily avail ourselves of our flexibility and enterprise in a creative imitation of the various traditions of other countries. Certainly, the servile imitation of the old German tradition belongs already to the past. Instead of looking with awe upon the industry and thoroughness and efficiency of the Germans, we are somewhat complacently aware that there are also an American industry, thoroughness, and efficiency. It remains to be seen whether there is also an American as well as a French intelligence.

Is there not more of cant than intelligence in our conventional repetition of such terms as "productive scholarship," "contributions to the sum of knowledge"? It is time to ask ourselves, in all sobriety, or, if you will, with wholesome ridicule: "Productive of what?" "Knowledge of what?" Of Truth? Alas, that high word is likewise anaesthetic to our intelligence. Truth itself, as Milton held, may become an heresy. We are proficient in lip-service, wanting in dedica-

tion—here, at least, we still have something to learn from Germany. We cannot repeat, without hypocrisy, the ringing challenge with which Fichte roused the scholars of his land: "I am a priest of the truth; I am in her service; I have bound myself to do and to dare and to suffer everything for her. Should I be persecuted and hated for her sake, should I even die in her service, what should I be doing that is remarkable, what should I be doing further than what I simply had to do?" No, ours is rather that modern goddess denounced by Ruskin, the goddess of Getting-On. Impregnated with the commercial spirit of America, our professors strain to be productive, to be sensational, to play the game brilliantly.

It was not always so. It was not so in the days of Everett and Ticknor, German-trained humanists in the renaissance of American culture, who were capable of eliciting the enthusiasm of a student like Emerson. It was already beginning to be so when James Russell Lowell, in his Harvard Anniversary address in 1886, found it necessary to deplore the new dry rot of learning, the alienation of scholarship from culture and criticism, the narrow pursuit of those facts which are to truth "as a plaster-cast to the marble statue." Having witnessed since his time an extension of these tendencies to the point of absurdity, we should find it instructive to compare our present types of schol-

ar—the older, mechanical with amenity, the younger, with smartness or utter rawness—with the type that Lowell himself represented and described. Living laborious days and nights, Lowell became not only one of the most learned but also one of the most cultivated men of his time and nation. He combined scientific observation of externals, direct insight into the creative experience, and centrality of taste and criticism. He became a distinguished scholar, teacher, and critic by virtue of endowments, strenuous self-culture, and the felicity of living in a time when men still believed that important kinds of truth exist. "We owe a great debt to the Germans," he freely acknowledged. "No one is more indebted to them than I, but is there not danger of their misleading us in some directions into pedantry?" For "philology is less beautiful to me than philosophy, as Milton understood the word"; and this philosophy, or science "in its noblest definition," he himself defined as "that breadth and impartiality of view which liberates the mind from specialties, and enables it to organize whatever we learn, so that it becomes real Knowledge by being brought into true and helpful relation with the rest." In the field of literature this truer knowledge is the province of criticism, menaced, in Lowell's day, by an undue absorption in language and texts—"a tendency," as he put it, "to train young men in the languages as if they were all to be editors."

Three years after, at the close of his address before the Modern Language Association, he sounded the same warning. "If I did not rejoice," he said, "in the wonderful advance made in the comparative philology of the modern languages, I should not have the face to be standing here. But neither should I if I shrank from saying what I believed to be the truth, whether here or elsewhere. I think that the purely linguistic side in the teaching of them seems in the way to get more than its fitting share. I insist only that in our college courses this should be a separate study, and that, good as it is in itself, it should, in the scheme of general instruction, be restrained to its own function as the guide to something better. And that something better is Literature." It will be noted that Lowell did not say that this something better was literary history. If he were living in our time he would have to protest against a new tyranny, the training of young men and women as if they were all to be historians, the bland assumption that they must all become scientific investigators of the phenomena of change. While welcoming the wonderful advance made in literary history, he would insist that this study too should be restrained to its function as one of the guides to literature, and that literature itself should be studied for its wisdom, its beauty, its civilizing properties, its humanizing effects in elevating and fortifying the mind. This is literary

criticism in its wide sense, and this is what Lowell means when he calls for a more philosophical approach to literature.

To call for such an approach was also the express purpose of the presidential address of Carleton Brown before the Modern Humanities Research Association last year in London. Although Professor Brown points out that various scientific fields must be cultivated in the interest of the humanities, he further points out the tendency "for investigations in any one of these special fields to become, not a means to an end, but an end in itself." Against this he protests, rather whimsically, in the name of dead authors, who did not write in order to supply material for scientific exercises. What they wrote, he properly concludes, was literature, an embodiment, as he says, of "the underlying and permanent significance of humanity," and accordingly "the final goal of our research . . . is to understand and interpret the life of man. This you, no doubt, are saying to yourselves, may be good philosophy, but it does not sound much like research. I am not sure that it is not both."

Here is a new note in recent American scholarship; time will show whether it signifies a change of heart, a new resolution in consequence of a new vision, and the waning of our present essentially aimless productiveness. Who that frankly surveys the contemporary

scene will deny that our scientific and skeptical age has long been drifting toward pure chaos, and our literary scholarship with it? In our exaggerated emphasis on mechanical technique, in our failure to perceive that thoroughness demands far more than this technique, in our blindness to the need of discipline in taste, imaginative insight, and critical acuteness and breadth, in the rareness of such qualities as reflection, poise, proportion, and sanity, in the sterility of general ideas that renders much of our instruction external and phenomenal, in the absorption in time and relativity that causes us to confuse literature with literary history and literary history with history, in the undertone of futility which often betrays a romantic purposelessness in place of a clear-minded dedication to the humanities, in the recurrent note of cant in our enthusiasm for contributions to the sum of knowledge, above all, perhaps, in the cheap worship of success and pursuit of the novel and sensational, American scholarship is only too clearly reflecting the contemporary paradox of strenuous production in the outer world of action accompanied with disintegration in the inner world of thought. Order will one day be with us again, but if that order is to be centrally human instead of arbitrary, if we are to avoid new eccentric dogmas and superstitions and old ones in a new guise, it will be largely because

the scholars and educators, as their contribution to the new order, have applied learning and the passion for truth to the study of the universal and unchanging in man, "the underlying and permanent significance of humanity."

IX

EDUCATION

Before we can have a better scholarship we must have a better education; and the establishment of a better education will be attended with formidable difficulties. It will probably have to come with the approbation and coöperation of the scientific hierarchy still entrenched in our colleges and universities from coast to coast, the historical investigators, who, if skeptical of tradition in general, are convinced that their own special tradition of scholarship is universally sound and worthy of indefinite transmission. It is proverbially idle to ask the leopard to change his spots, or to beget offspring of another species.

The supporters of the present system would perhaps assent to a majority of the ideas I have been developing, only to damn them as truisms. They would perhaps concede that literary history, like linguistics, is a preliminary study, that a too factual scholarship is to be avoided, that some danger lurks in the growing interest in historical and psychological backgrounds, that aesthetic appreciation and taste are

really very important, that an element of criticism is inevitable while the ignorance of critics is not inevitable; and then, having thus overcome opposition by absorbing it, they would remind us, with a plausibility attained by limiting the subject, that knowledge is the only means yet found for combatting ignorance, that, as Huxley declared, there is but one kind of knowledge and one method of getting it, that this knowledge is the special province of the scholar or professor, and that the stern discipline it demands is a sure preparation for all advanced literary study. The present system works, it bears fruit, it is the best of all possible systems even in this not best of all possible worlds.

I do not believe that any such rejoinder goes to the bottom of the matter. Nor do I believe that it represents the real state of mind of our scientific educators. Their failure to act in accordance with their ultimate ideal, their refusal to take steps that will really lead to the end desired, can only betoken, in the last analysis, that their ideal is not, after all, clear and compelling to them. It wears a ghostly air. It bodes some strange eruption to the state of learning. They will not let belief take hold of them. Oftenest, they are restrained by personal habit and professional convention, which are so much easier than the clear thinking one expects of scholars. Often, they are restrained

by self-interest, which bids them cling to the present ways till inevitable symptoms of change beckon to the untrod ways. Both types obey familiar tendencies of human nature. There is, however, a third type, illustrative of the *Zeitgeist* and destined some day to be historically interesting, that immensely complicates our problem.

Overlapping the other two, this third type represents the vast numbers of scholars whose higher activities have been paralyzed by the skepticism of the age.[1]

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[1]This type of mind is conveniently mirrored in a text-book that has commended itself to teachers of those courses in Bibliography and Methods which show the serious student whither he is bound and what road he must travel: André Morize, *Problems and Methods of Literary History*, Boston, 1922. As an introduction to scientific research, this work is praiseworthy enough, though, to mention a small matter, it seems strange to advise the critical bibliographer to "take care to number the pages in each article. This gives an idea of its importance if not of its thoroughness."

However expert its methodism, the book fails lamentably to convey a clear notion of the non-scientific aspects of scholarship. Curiously, the ultimate purpose of scholarship appears to be the same as its initial purpose, viz., "scientific curiosity combined with scientific conscientiousness," even if we hear incidentally of "aspirations towards general ideas" (aspirations they may remain!), "warm appreciation of beautiful writings" (warmth without light, one infers), "breadth of view" (mystically attained by premature specialization), "penetration in aesthetic judgments" (the judgments of an untrained mind): "these are a few of the valuable qualities that, thoroughly understood and thoroughly carried out, literary studies tend to develop"—or to atrophy. Casually mentioned in the introduction, these qualities are dismissed till the conclusion, five pages in length,—this gives an idea of its importance if not of its thoroughness,—where all save one are virtually ignored, that one being, of course, warm appreciation of beautiful writings. We are advised to "let ourselves be carried away by beauty" and, by "communion with ourselves," to assure "the budding and blossoming of taste" and "keep the fresh, precious faculty of admiration from withering within us." Whereas scientific method is won only by unremitting discipline of the mind

Without seeking to rise above the age by doubting its assumptions, without stopping to apply to it the test of a fundamental analysis, they have entered into its skeptical current emotionally, experiencing a univer-

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and will, taste appears to be a sensitive plant that springs up spontaneously in scientists and blossoms eternally, if it does not wither, "in the mine of science." Although we hear a dark saying about "turning taste into a sort of historical method" and cannot well reconcile this with the romantic dogma that "a man of taste" is "an artist," we are probably right in assuming that our guide uses the word taste in the romantic sense of gusto, a lively responsiveness of the aesthetic palate.

What, then, of criticism? Our guide is ambiguous. In the first chapter, after ruling out criticism from the domain of the literary historian, he unwittingly restores it by saying that the historian's first step is "to seize as completely and accurately as possible the meaning of the work—words and ideas, historical, philosophical, and artistic value." If "philosophical, and artistic value" does not involve criticism, it does not involve anything. Only at the close of the book do we again hear of value, yes, "lasting value," which we are to "judge sanely." And to judge sanely we need only join the sect of impressionist critics: "The discipline that a student of literary history is invited to undergo should, then, on no pretext whatever divert or distract him from the impressionism that is not only legitimate but essential." Unless the author is hopelessly confused, as he certainly appears to be, impressionism here means what it means in the first chapter, the creed of a school of criticism interested in "purely personal reaction." Significantly, the first person quoted in the book is Lanson, who says, "Impressionism is the only method that puts us in touch with beauty," and the person who gets the last word is not the author but Anatole France, arch impressionist and advocate of "a natural friendship for beauty." Furthermore, if the final object of the book is to urge graduate students to join the impressionistic revolt, it is at the same time to warn them against the older forms of criticism founded on some "preëstablished" doctrine. This comes with a very bad grace after the disarming admission in the first chapter that "literary history, working in its own field, is trying neither to replace nor oppose literary criticism. . . . It offers its services as a devoted auxiliary, modest and self-effacing. . . . It prepares the material for the critic but puts no restrictions on the way he should use it."

All of which, according to my observation, is an accurate picture of the mind of the scientist-dilettante begotten of our latter-day mechanism and skepticism.

sal prejudice to universals of all sorts, an essentially uncritical aversion from all criticism aiming at objective validity, a distaste for all speculations and hypotheses save those of the peculiar sort with which they fill the learned journals. When impressionists of the tender-minded school, they dream of an alchemy turning taste into a sort of historical method; when impressionists of the tough-minded school, they posit the relativity and futility of all judgment and give their energies to adding to or patching up the pyramid of literary history. The higher interests and activities of scholarship they turn over to the critics as debonairly as the critics turn over scientific accuracy and historical erudition to the scholars. And the critics, likewise sucked into the current of the age, affect either the impressionism of aimless open-mindedness or that of smart self-exploitation. The net result is that the higher interests and activities of scholarship suffer almost total neglect, and that the need of an educational system attending to them grows daily more serious.

Just what the new educational system will be must remain uncertain till there has been far more searching of hearts and minds. Graduate students rarely display anything more serious than resentment against a mechanism interfering with their "natural friendship with beauty," a resentment readily silenced by

their masters. Among the masters themselves misgivings are not yet urgent, though in a few instances there is a humble groping for new light. But as the scientific novelists have been giving us one form of realism after another, without introducing a really new principle, so, it is to be feared, will the scientists in our scholarship for some time offer nothing more than variants of their present aims and methods. As the French say, "The more it changes, the more it is the same thing." The misgivings must first quicken and deepen. The current skepticism must turn upon itself, and inquire whether it is indeed so fair-minded and thoroughgoing as it prides itself on being, whether common sense, which it defies, is not in the end more trustworthy than corrosive doubt. Having regained our common sense, we shall be ready to employ our reasoning powers to advantage in the task of restating the aims and methods of scholarship and the task of devising a suitable educational programme.

In no spirit of prophecy and without utopian delusions, but rather with the object of rendering more plain the ideas I have been supporting, I will append a scheme of education in letters that might, conceivably, yield better results than those attained by the scheme still prevailing.

Since thorough scholarship in any field demands a liberal foundation, the traditional function of the lib-

eral college must be restored. At present the liberal college is being ground between the nether millstone of the secondary school and the upper millstone of the graduate school, the first two years being devoted largely to elementary studies and the last two to specialization looking toward graduate studies. If the nether millstone can be removed only very slowly, the upper can and should be removed at once. That is, instruction permeated with the current graduate aims and methods should be abandoned, along with the practice of specialization without sufficient cultural background in such fields as history, philosophy, science, and language and literature. To provide this background for life or for learning is the proper function of the college, and there must consequently be an undergraduate faculty, distinct from that of the graduate school, consisting of professors interested in the liberal point of view and in the problems that peculiarly concern the undergraduate mind. The crudities of American civilization forbid the rejection, for a long time to come, except in a few favored institutions, of the liberal four-year college and the bachelor's degree.

The master's degree, at present so vague that it is easily available for any purpose, should normally represent two years of assimilative study preparatory to a teaching career, a literary career, or a scholarly career.

During these two years the liberal point of view would be continued, but the professional point of view would also have a place, manifesting itself in a suddenly heightened intensity of effort and a beginning in specialization. The candidate in the field of English, for example, would be engaged in an assimilative study of English literature from Chaucer onward, in which literary history would be employed to illuminate rather than obscure the literature itself, the dominant object being an intimate familiarity with and an humane comprehension of the work of the great writers. Other subjects would be necessary (and consequently more than two years of study) in case the candidate had not secured in college a sufficient understanding of the Classical languages and literatures (the study of Greek would normally continue in the graduate school), one modern foreign language and literature (French or Italian or German), the fine arts or one of them, the history of philosophy, and the political and social history of Europe. In the study of literature, the discipline of facts—the habit of accuracy in the use of names, dates, events, quotations, etc.—would be resolutely insisted upon as a means to the end, and students unable to acquire this control of facts without undue instruction would be expected to abandon their candidacy. It would be folly to permit our instruction to be determined, as at present, either by students whose

sense of fact is weak or by those who have no higher sense. We must aim, not at a merely factual, external accuracy but at a properly proportioned accuracy in facts, ideas, aesthetic perception, and taste in its full meaning. Accuracy of this higher sort would be encouraged by practice in writing, some of it historical, some of it critical, and some of it creative (to assist an inner comprehension of art), but there would be no "thesis" of the scientific type. The final examination, oral or written, would concern primarily English literature, not, as now, English literary history. The whole programme, unlike that of the present A.M. and Ph.D., would fit the student for secondary or college instruction; in practice, the new A.M. would be mainly a "teaching degree." At the same time the programme would serve the needs of creative writers, at present lamentably uneducated, and would afford a liberal literary foundation for more specialized literary study leading to the doctorate. Since the master's degree would thus mark either an end of systematic study or a fresh beginning in study, it could be awarded in two grades: a simple degree ordinarily implying teaching in the secondary school or the college, and a scholarship degree implying candidacy for a still higher degree.

This higher degree presents a more difficult problem. Of the two types of research, the scientific and

the critical, or, as Professor Legouis has termed them, the two types of criticism, the erudite and the literary, America has thus far recognized only the former, which it has practised so successfully that in certain fields, as M. Legouis observes, it appears to have outstripped Germany herself. France has meanwhile endeavored organically to reconcile the two types in a well-rounded scholarship, as is manifest in such dissertations as those by Angellier, Cazamian, Feuillerat, Huchon, and Legouis, to name only a few in the field of English. The distinction of such scholarship was indicated in an article by M. Legouis in the *Yale Review* in 1915. Ten years later, however, in the same periodical, M. Feuillerat revealed brilliantly the fundamental weakness of all modern scholarship, including even that of France, its failure to deal resolutely with criticism, "the hardest and most complicated of intellectual occupations," its failure "to attain an intimate perception of the human value of literature." Yet surely France is closer than any other nation to the ideal of a well-rounded scholarship: a scholarship at once scientific and critical, close to the facts but dominating them through general ideas, taste, and critical insight, contributing to knowledge in the best sense, and developing rather than warping the scholar himself. Is such an ideal possible in America, land of cults rather than culture? In another half-century or cen-

tury, perhaps. Meanwhile, shall we make a start, however bungling, in this direction, by abandoning the German doctorate and emulating the French? Or shall we recognize the two types of research by permitting students to approach the doctorate by either of two avenues, one emphasizing scientific power and the other emphasizing critical power?

Frankly, I think the time has come to abandon the German doctorate. Having performed its invaluable function in American education, it is already old-fashioned and even anachronistic. It suited our needs in the nineteenth century, as the French doctorate suits our needs in the twentieth century. Not yet are we ready to declare, as Emerson rashly declared nearly a hundred years ago, that "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close." The spirit of learning is humble, and it befits us to admit that our ideals and standards are low in comparison with those of France. Far more submissive to scientism and mechanism than France has been, it is time for us to look to her for a more intelligent direction of our energies, a more humane devotion to the humanities. I believe that we should at once proceed to take steps, cautious but firm, to institute the French doctorate, even though it cannot be ideally administered by our present personnel.

The alternative solution may, however, be necessary. As everybody knows, the resistance of intrenched systems to fundamental reform is strong and sustained. Instead of effecting an organic reconciliation of the two elements in research, we shall perhaps be fortunate if we can effect a compromise by providing two methods of attaining the degree. Such an arrangement would face the fact that students who have genuine aptitude for both scientific and critical research are excessively rare; at best they are "born" for the one or the other. By having had a liberal college education and two years of liberal concentration upon one literature, they should be adequately protected from the danger of serious deformation, and might be encouraged to develop further their native talent for linguistic or historical study, on the one hand, or for humane criticism on the other. Having secured the A.M. degree in its higher form, they would be regarded as candidates for either of the two types of doctorate. In most cases, they would be well advised to stay in the graduate school at least another year, unhampered by teaching, in order to read and reflect, to take part in a seminar, or to begin work, under direction, on a particular author or problem. These activities would be continued, so far as circumstances permitted, after they had entered upon teaching in a college or university. Within eight or ten years after becoming candidates,

they might hope to have produced a piece of distinguished publication demonstrating their power for scientific or critical scholarship in the judgment of the academic world. The standard should be as high as real distinction is uncommon, and to assure such a standard national committees of award should be set up for each type of doctorate.

I am not specially concerned, at this time, with the practical difficulties in this plan. I am well aware, for example, that such national committees as might be set up today would be likely to stultify the objects of the plan and create a situation even worse than that which now confronts us. Practical difficulties will certainly abound during the transition from the present system to any other whatsoever, and they may be faced most wisely, no doubt, by a continuation of our American custom of local experiment. My object in suggesting a new plan, as I have already indicated, has been simply to throw into relief the ideas for which I have been contending, to translate them, so to speak, into the familiar terms of our educational mechanism.

I need not dwell, on the other hand, on the advantages of such a plan if it could indeed be carried out —the various services it promises to scholarship, to education, to criticism, to creative literature. I will content myself with a single assertion, namely, that it would attract to our graduate schools better students.

It would attract better students because it would satisfy the desires and the needs of nearly all the most promising students of literature, who, under the existing system, are repelled by a training that emphasizes everything but literature. This has been remarked by many able observers. Stuart Sherman, for instance, fresh from the Harvard of twenty years ago, declared that "The very best men do not enter upon graduate study at all; the next best drop out after a year's experiment; the mediocre men at the end of two years; the most unfit survive and become doctors of philosophy, who go forth and reproduce their kind." Despite its sardonic exaggeration, this criticism contains enough truth to give us pause. It is idle to reply to it that the alleged superior men are merely sentimental dilettanti who refuse to undergo discipline, for, in the first place, many of them have a genuinely humane interest in literature, and, in the second place, many others, inclined as youth is to sentimentalism and dilettantism, would be entirely willing to undergo an humane as distinguished from a mainly scientific discipline. Further, it should be clear by this time that a mainly scientific discipline does not succeed in overcoming sentimentalism and dilettantism, as scholars who have undergone that discipline show through their writing and teaching. They have never matured, never entered into their humanity, and it is the per-

ception of this fact that renders the very best students suspicious of the whole system. A few of them, perceiving no alternative, bitterly resign themselves and submit to all requirements laid down by the longest-armed job-getters, trusting that their interest in the creative and critical points of view, if not developed, will at least not perish. Others, perhaps the largest group, reacting sharply, are suffered to abandon themselves to journalistic criticism and literary hackwork of sundry kinds. Still others, eager readers and writers while in college, never so much as contemplate entering the graduate school but frankly turn to business or one of the professions other than teaching, in the hope that they may cultivate letters at least as a subordinate vocation or as a hobby. Such students as these, by no means rare, men and women with literary talents superior to those of the more docile factual students, we sometimes misshape and far oftener exclude altogether. Yet they are the very students most urgently needed in the graduate school of the twentieth century, to be trained for leadership in the establishment of a sounder culture than has yet appeared in this country. If it was natural for the American scholar, in the romantic America of the earlier nineteenth century, to declare that literature is "for nothing but to inspire," if it became natural for him, after the later German influence, to assume that lit-

erature is for nothing but *strengwissenschaftlich* phenomenal investigation, it will one day become natural for him to rise above personal and historical estimates and to study literature as the record, in terms of beauty, of the strivings of Mankind to know and express itself.